

*Old Town Greenwood
Redevelopment Committee*

**Redeveloping Old City Park
and the Southeast Corner of
Main and Madison Avenue in
Greenwood**

Final Report to Mayor Charles Henderson

July 21, 2008

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Background & Overview

Formulating a plan for the redevelopment of Old Town Greenwood has long been a topic of discussion and debate. Various groups and individuals have offered opinions ranging from “preserve everything downtown the way it is” to “tear it all down and start over.” Over the years there have been numerous discussions but resources were not been available to conduct an analysis of current Old Town demographics, consider alternatives and move forward with revitalization efforts.

In January 2008, Mayor Henderson, at his State of the City Address, asked the Community to begin the process of developing a plan to breathe new life into Greenwood’s City center. This undertaking requires a tremendous amount of human participation and monetary commitment to move forward. In addition, formulating and implementing a plan to turn Old Town into an area that preserves existing environmental amenities, if possible, yet creates a thriving mixed-use development for residents, retail shops, professional services and commercial businesses is a long-term, multi-year process. Efforts toward revitalizing Old Town Greenwood are a direct result of the recommendations set forth in the 2007-2027 City of Greenwood Comprehensive Plan.

In early 2008, Mayor Henderson assembled and activated the Old Town Redevelopment Committee (OTRC) to:

- Review the Old Town Key Concepts and Goals & Objectives from the 2007-2027 City of Greenwood Comprehensive Plan;
- Develop a vision for redevelopment of Old Town (*what elements do we want to see in Old Town and how do we get there*);
- Develop an Action Plan based on the vision and aforementioned Goals & Objectives;
- Develop a timeline for implementation of the Action Plan; and
- Initiate implementation of the Action Plan.

The OTRC was convened on January 14, 2008 and will complete a final report by July 2008.

Key Concepts and Goals & Objectives for Old Town Greenwood (2007-2027 Comprehensive Plan)

- Old Town must be revitalized.
- Old Town’s gateways and focal points should be visible from major intersections.
- Old Town should be large enough to plan.
- Greenwood (the municipality) must demonstrate a commitment to Old town before businesses will invest in the area.

Goal 1 – Make Old Town a thriving and vibrant district that becomes a cultural and government destination for all of Greenwood.

- Update the image of the Old Town area.
- Create a master plan for the Old Town area.
- Make Old Town pedestrian friendly.
- Create a major public gathering place, such as a town square.
- Consolidate government offices in the Old Town district.

Goal 2 – Encourage a vibrant economy for Old Town.

- Redevelop Market Plaza as a sustainable downtown anchor or destination.
- Revitalize historic district.
- Market downtown locations to targeted business segments.
- Ensure proper commercial signage.
- Permit and encourage mixed-use developments, such as live-over-work structures.

Goal 3 – Make Old Town attractive to developers.

- Actively engage city government in redevelopment activities.
- Provide for the consolidation of properties when required for redevelopment.
- Permit mixed use of buildings, such as residential over business.

Goal 4 – Beautify Old Town.

- Support beautification projects that focus on surface cleanliness and functional issues.
- Retrofit Old Town with underground utilities.
- Create a major public gathering space, such as a town square.
- Create multiple gateways to Old Town that are visible from all four directions.

Goal 5 – Improve Main Street traffic flow.

- Study the impact of converting certain Old Town streets to one-way.
- Solve the problems of vehicular congestion, pedestrian access, etc. at Main Street and Madison.
- Ensure Old Town connections to all multi-modal transportation systems.

Goal 6 – Ensure that Old Town is served by adequate, attractive, and obvious parking options.

- Promote safe, clean, accessible, available, and visible public parking locations with wayfinding.

Goal 7 – Establish a larger historic district in Old Town

- Establish design standards for the architectural appearance of Old Town.

While the above key concepts, goals & objectives are ambitious and challenging, the OTRC reviewed each category and has addressed many of the above in the report below. ***The work of the OTRC from January – June 2008 is only the beginning of work that will carry through to the end of the 2007-2027 City of Greenwood Comprehensive Plan.***

Identified Area for Initial Redevelopment

At his State of the City Address in January, Mayor Henderson identified the first area for an Old Town redevelopment initiative. The identified quadrant boundaries are:

- Greenwood Public Library (south);
- Meridian Street (east);
- Main Street (north);
- Madison Avenue (west); and
- Machledt Drive intersects the area running east and west.

This area, currently, is a mix of business and park area. While the 2007-2027 Comprehensive Plan identified Market Plaza as the possible “first phase” for redevelopment, there were several reasons why the above quadrant was chosen:

1. The City of Greenwood currently owns Old City Park and some additional property on the north side of Machledt Drive;
2. Due to Flood Plain issues, the creek running through Old City Park will play a key role in what development can be done in other areas of Old Town (i.e. Market Plaza);
3. Old City Park is situated in close proximity to many cultural, recreational and educational opportunities (i.e. Greenwood Public Library, the Greenwood Amphitheater, Our Lady of the Greenwood, Greenwood Middle School, the Greenwood Community Center, etc.);
4. Key business-owners in the quadrant are desirous of selling their property; and
5. Commercial Developers are interested in this corner of Old Town.

The OTRC agreed that the redevelopment initiative is a multi-year endeavor and the identified quadrant, due to the above reasons, initially stands the best chance for success. In addition, because the City of Greenwood already owns Old City Park, redevelopment can proceed at a quicker pace and the impact to taxpayers may be reduced.

Old Town Redevelopment Committee Summary of Work

The OTRC “hit the ground running” realizing six months was not a lot of time in which to formulate a plan for the Old Town area. A summary of activities follows:

- The OTRC was recruited and activated on January 14, 2008.
- The OTRC will have met no more than 10 times by the end of June 2008.
- The OTRC will prepare a final report to be presented to Mayor Henderson by July 1, 2008.
- The OTRC reviewed and discussed the 2007-2027 Comprehensive Plan recommendations for Old Town.
- Discussions were held with interested Commercial Developers.
- Discussions were held with an Engineer to discuss the traffic issues around the Main Street and Madison Avenue intersection.
- Discussions were held with Urban Planners.
- Discussions were held with Indiana Main Street representatives.
- Discussions were held with Historical Preservation representatives.
- Discussions were held with Marketing & Public Relations firms.
- Discussions were held with the Mayors of Beech Grove and Southport about the visions for their communities.
- Discussions were held with the Johnson County Community Foundation about setting up a financial conduit for revitalization grant monies.
- Discussions were held with the Franklin City Planner regarding their redevelopment efforts.
- One Grant application was submitted to the Lincoln Bank Charitable Foundation.
- OTRC members were approached by many individuals wanting to give feedback on the redevelopment project.
- OTRC members either visited or did research on other city and town redevelopment efforts. One member spent several hours visiting Carmel, Indiana.
- Numerous interviews were given to the local TV stations, Daily Journal, Indianapolis Star & the Southside Times.

- The Old Town Greenwood Merchant Association was approached about and approved dropping the “e” from Towne to dovetail with the recommendation in the new Comprehensive Plan.
- The OTRC began sharing information and meeting with the City of Greenwood Economic Development Commission.
- One Community Forum was held to gather public input on the proposed redevelopment project.
- The OTRC formulated a vision and recommendations for Mayor Henderson.

Community Forum and Public Input

As a part of the work of the task force, a public input meeting was held at First Baptist Church in the Old Town area. Approximately 100 persons were in attendance at the June 3, 2008 gathering. Bill Kincius and Mark Richards both spoke about the concept drawings created by Bill that were initially displayed at the Mayor’s State of the City address in January and have been used in subsequent public venues including publication in local papers and at the public meeting June 3. David Roth and Cory Whitesell from the firm Hannum, Wagle & Cline Engineering were recognized and spoke briefly about their role in providing initial engineering services and cost estimates for the redevelopment of Old City Park as an initial investment showing the city’s commitment to downtown redevelopment. David encouraged those present to share their comments and concerns.

Twelve persons chose to speak in response to the initial presentation by the task force. Several speakers spoke very favorably about the proposed project and encouraged public investment in the park and in infrastructure that would spur private developers to come on-board the project. Others applauded the effort to improve traffic flow as well as encourage people to come to Old Town to shop, eat and play. Helpful suggestions such as the need for good signage, parking and safe areas for pedestrians to walk and “free Wi-Fi” were expressed.

Concerns expressed by citizens in attendance included questions of the impact of redevelopment on local homeowners (and home values) in the area and environmental impacts such as storm water on adjacent properties. Other concerns included: questioning the need to take down old buildings, mature trees and change the look of Old Town. While many participants expressed a positive view toward ideas for Old City Park, there was widespread hesitation surrounding the question of what might happen to the Machledt house and property if this project becomes a reality. Many people present applauded when it was suggested that the Machledt house remain as a part of a revitalized downtown. Additional public comments included: expansion of the project into the western quadrant of Market Plaza, the need to do more “critical thinking” about the costs and benefits of redevelopment and to “get real” in what we can afford to do. Several public speakers also expressed their opposition to any plans for revitalization.

Mayor Charles Henderson expressed the need for a vibrant Old Town and the need for an identity beyond Greenwood Park Mall. He challenged listeners to understand that successful communities invest in themselves and that a strong Old Town is one of our best Economic Development tools. He shared a vision for this project in the heart of our city as a place to walk, shop, expand business and residential opportunities and provide inviting and attractive open space. “It’s been too long without something happening, something needs to be done,” he was quoted as saying.

The public was directed to send additional comments and feedback to the Old Town Merchant Association website at www.oldtowngreenwood.com. Any comments or feedback that is coming through this website is being forwarded on to appropriate individuals for response.

Old Town Redevelopment Vision for the Future

While the City of Greenwood is a great place to live, work and play, urban development has swallowed up the small-town intimacy that existed 50 years ago. The challenge for the City of Greenwood is to re-create a hub to which families and businesses will gravitate. To that end, the OTRC puts forth the following vision:

Old Town will be the central hub of Greenwood activity with safe, pedestrian friendly streets, great family activities and amenities, affordable housing options and beautiful facade buildings that house a myriad of retail, government, cultural and professional businesses. Together these elements and amenities will charm area residents and welcome guests from the farthest reaches of our country.

Recommended Elements and Design Standards for Old Town Redevelopment

People thrive on interaction. Economic shifts, over time, have erased the need to separate work, shopping and home life. Mixed-use urban spaces bring people together in different ways, creating a vibrant kind of interaction and synergy. Cities thrive on the need for people to come together in so many ways, which cannot be strictly planned. The rising cost of housing, traffic congestion and the need to ensure the long-term economic viability of city centers also helps to contribute to increased multi-use development. Listed below are recommended elements and design standards for Old Town (*some were previously identified as recommendations from the 2007-2027 Comprehensive Plan. The OTRC has expanded on some of those recommendations*).

- Create multiple gateways to Old Town that are visible from all four directions.
- Establish design standards for the architectural appearance of Old Town. If current buildings must be sacrificed to create a thriving, sustainable area, new architectural designs should reflect an Old Town “feel” in order to promote a “warm & fuzzy” environment for area residents and visitors.
- Create a major public gathering space, such as a town square, and areas for social strolling. This will include wide, safe walking paths; adequate benches and seating; public spaces in the sun; buildings built with large, wide porches with seating and tables; spaces for musical groups and festivals; etc.
- Beautification projects should focus on surface cleanliness and functional issues. Provision of ample space for bright colored flowers and foliage; fountains, statues or monuments; and aesthetically pleasing trash receptacles, lights and safety storage areas are critical elements of area redevelopment. Retrofitting Old Town with underground utilities would hide ugly overhead wiring and poles.
- Ensure Old Town connections to all multi-modal transportation systems including taxi-cabs and buses. Provide sheltered waiting areas with local and area information guides.
- Promote safe, clean, accessible, available, and visible public parking locations with wayfinding (how to navigate from one place to another).
- Design a solution for vehicular congestion, pedestrian access, etc. at Main Street and Madison Avenue. In addition, traffic studies should be conducted in the general Old Town area to plan for other phases of redevelopment.
- Recruit businesses to the area that will let people purchase food or drink. Food and beverage vendors should be a mix of early morning, lunch and evening venues that offer an affordable variety of offerings. In addition, outside seating should be encouraged.
- Recruit retail businesses to the area that provide current and future residents with products and services they require for every day life. These include, but are not limited to: medical, legal, financial and other professional services; pet-friendly services and retail products;

- walking and biking services and products; services and products for all age ranges but especially children; grocery stores; dry cleaners, etc.
- Integrate current cultural activities into the revitalized area by organizing festival-type events. The identified area for redevelopment has many things such as the Southside Art League, the Greenwood Amphitheater, etc. in close proximity that could launch community activities. An area visitor center would be a good addition to the redevelopment area.
- The area must include free, wireless internet connectivity.

Old Town Redevelopment Committee Recommendations

Phase I

1. Hire an Urban Planner to identify and convene the Development Team to finalize and implement the Old Town Redevelopment Committee recommendations.

The OTRC is comprised of 11 dedicated volunteers with various levels of community involvement and expertise. However, it was very clear from the beginning of our work that there were no urban-planning experts in the group. In addition, almost everyone who gave feedback or participated in discussions stressed the importance of hiring an Urban Planning firm to work with the redevelopment “team” that may include appropriate City Staff, Commercial Developers, businesses, residents and others involved with the project. The Urban Planner will oversee development of project design standards.

While a Director of Community Development has been hired by the City to oversee the implementation of the 2007-2027 Comprehensive Plan, his duties also include supervising the Engineering and Planning Departments and to function as the City Engineer. The City of Greenwood Staff members do not have the time or the comprehensive level of expertise to concentrate on the redevelopment of the Old Town area.

It is recommended, however, that City Staff work closely with the Urban Planner during all phases of Old Town redevelopment. This will alleviate any issues with the project and possibly minimize external professional fees.

2. To dovetail with activities of the Urban Planner, City Staff should develop a plan to address the following elements of the project.

- Boundary map and aerials.
- Land use inventory (detailed).
- Parking inventory (detailed).
- Interviews with certain property owners/occupants.
- Old Town Master Plan (detailed)
- Old Town Overlay Zoning Ordinance.

3. Commission and fund the appropriate engineering studies for development of Old Town, including traffic, Old City Park, etc.

The OTRC received feedback from many sources. There were a few suggestions that emerged from the conversations, some of which have been covered in the above recommendations. All of the Commercial Developers who have expressed an interest in being part of the redevelopment “team” told the OTRC that they will not participate unless:

- The City of Greenwood agrees to participate financially in the redevelopment effort in Old Town Greenwood.
- The City of Greenwood agrees to address and rectify traffic issues at the Main Street and Madison Avenue intersection.

Therefore, it is recommended that the City of Greenwood allocate the appropriate funding to commission and complete any studies needed for the build-out of the identified redevelopment quadrant. This includes traffic studies needed for the entire Old Town area, with the most critical being Main Street and Madison Avenue. Upon completion of the initial studies, the OTRC recommends that next steps be taken to design plans for rectifying any identified issues surrounding the redevelopment quadrant.

4. Determine historical preservation issues for Old Town.

The OTRC recommends that City Staff identify any historic preservation issues that are relevant to the identified redevelopment quadrant. In addition, as stated previously, the OTRC recommends formulating and implementing a plan to turn Old Town into an area that preserves existing environmental amenities, if possible, yet creates a thriving mixed-use development for residents, retail shops, professional services and commercial businesses.

Phase II

1. Join the Indiana Main Street Program.

Indiana Main Street was established to provide economic revitalization and professional assistance to participating communities. Indiana Main Street encourages the revitalization and restoration of downtown areas in Indiana cities and towns. As the traditional heart and hub of government, commerce, justice and social interaction, the downtown business district portrays a city's overall image.

The OTRC recommends that the City of Greenwood become a member of the Indiana Main Street Program. Many area cities, including Franklin, reap huge benefits from the professionally designed materials and highly trained employees of the program. In addition, Indiana Main Street offers low cost seminars and workshops to keep City employees abreast of current trends with revitalization and redevelopment projects.

2. Identify and begin the process of securing funding sources.

The OTRC is conscious of residents' and business' concerns regarding increases in tax liability. Therefore the OTRC recommends that a plan to identify project funding sources be developed as soon as possible. This includes both public and private sources of funding. Initial research shows that grant opportunities, Tax Increment Financing (TIF), business sponsorships, donations, City funding, etc. are all available to help offset costs associated with redevelopment initiatives. This recommendation dovetails with the first recommendation to hire an Urban Planner. Again, the City Staff does not have the time or the comprehensive level of expertise to research, write and track grant opportunities and other funding sources for this initiative. Funding secured for the project should help offset professional service fees.

3. Begin exploring sponsorship opportunities amongst the business community.

The business community is always open to additional advertising opportunities that will contribute to their bottom line profits. In addition, businesses also want to be part of community development. If the community is thriving, chances are their business is going to thrive as well. With a well thought out business sponsorship package for Old Town redevelopment, many associated costs can be recouped by the City. The OTRC recommends this as a public/private “team-building” and funding strategy for community development.

4. Hire a Public Relations / Marketing firm to develop a plan, including branding, to promote the Old Town Master Plan.

In community development, action requires convincing other people to adopt the idea or product that is the basis of the development. Marketing provides a tool by which people can convince others to adopt their plan or product.

The OTRC recommends that a comprehensive marketing and public relations plan be developed for Old Town redevelopment, both with the initial phase, and for future phases. Many times marketing and public relations is either not done at all or executed by City Staff who do not have the time nor the expertise to design and implement a plan.

The OTRC has observed, over the years, that residents and businesses have been influenced by media reports on a variety of City projects. Since most media reports are focused on the negative impact to taxpayers and not on the positive outcomes for a community, projects are often met with resistance or abandoned altogether.

As the redevelopment of Old Town will require community “buy-in” to move it forward, the marketing and public relations plan should include the following elements:

- A program to brand the project, now and in the future;
- A marketing and press kit for distribution to interested parties;
- An interactive website to allow outgoing and incoming information and feedback about the project;
- Professionally-designed printed materials for distribution; and
- A sponsorship and donation program for area businesses and residents.

5. Recommend, if built, the new City Hall is located in Old Town Greenwood.

The OTRC recommends, if built, a new City Hall is located in Old Town Greenwood. As long as Greenwood City Government exists there will be a need for: 1) staff; 2) staff offices; 3) ancillary professional services; and 4) community services for employees (i.e. dry cleaning, groceries, restaurants, etc.). The OTRC believes that the seat of City Government will provide a stable “anchor” for the area that businesses and services will gravitate towards. This will help to insure the redevelopment of Old Town will be viable and sustainable throughout the years.

Financing Considerations for the Project

The OTRC identified funding needed in several areas:

- *Urban Planning Professional Services* – Phase 1 is estimated to be approximately \$29,000; Phase 2 estimates cannot be given until Phase 1 is completed.
- *Engineering Studies and Design Work*
- *Construction Work for Old City Park*
- *Construction Work for the Main Street and Madison Avenue Intersection*
- *Commercial Development of the Identified Quadrant*
- *Marketing and Public Relations Plan (including an interactive website)*

Next Steps & Timeline

Recognizing that the Old Town redevelopment initiative will be a multi-year project, the OTRC worked hard to prepare a framework from which to move into the next phase of redevelopment of the identified quadrant. *Next steps for the project include:*

1. As soon as possible, the City of Greenwood should allocate and dedicate adequate financial and staff support for the redevelopment initiative.
2. Design and construction work for commercial development should begin upon execution of an agreement between the City of Greenwood and the interested Commercial Developer(s).
3. By Summer 2008, An Old Town redevelopment design team should be assembled. The team should include parties interested in furthering the growth of Greenwood.
4. By Summer 2008, design work should begin on redeveloping Old City Park.
5. By Fall 2008, alternative funding sources should be researched and sought to finance as much of the redevelopment initiative as possible.
6. By December 31, 2008, a ceremonial groundbreaking should be held in Old City Park.
7. By Summer 2009, construction work should begin on Old City Park.

Committee Acknowledgment

The OTRC is proud to present this report to Mayor Charles Henderson, City of Greenwood, Indiana. The group would like to thank all parties who contributed to the work of the OTRC and to this report.

The Committee submitting this report includes:

- Stefan Bean
- Tony Boxdorfer
- Tom Bridges
- Mike Campbell
- Brent Corey
- Bill Kincius
- Carmen Madsen
- Jerry McKinney
- Gail Richards
- Carol Staab
- Allen Watts (resigned from the Committee in June)
- Jason West